Knowledge Sharing and Collaboration

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Abstract: *The voluminous growth of published documents in the recent past, increasing cost of information sources, technological advancements that offer newer methods of information processing, retrieval and dissemination are some of the factors which have made resource sharing a necessity. The library co-operation is a very old concept and a form of resource sharing. There are large instances of such co-operation among libraries in the library literature (Kaul. 1999). In wrighting this paper, the author attempts to explore and has examined a few areas in knowledge sharing and collaboration that are beneficial in the information science profession. The author has defined various terms in information sharing and collaboration; history of resource sharing; resource sharing: Kenyan Experience; why institutions should corporate in resource sharing, collaborative partnership, what is knowledge,types of knowledge; characteristics of knowledge; relationship between data, Information and Knowledge; knowledge creation; knowledge acquisisition; different ways of acquiring knowledge; libraries involved in Resource sharing; areas of resource sharing; benefits of resource sharing; ICT as a driving force for resource sharing; problems associated with knowledge transmission; challenges of resource sharing; role of information professionnals in knowledge sharing; way forward and conclusion*

Keywords: Resource sharing, Information, Knowledge, Collaboration

1. Definition of Terms

Data Information in raw form or unorganized form that refer to conditions, ideas or objects

Information refers to data that is accurate and timely, specific and organized for a purpose presented within a context that gives it meaning and relevance and can lead to an increase in understanding and decrease in uncertainty

Knowledge refers to facts, information and skills acquired by a person through experience or education; the theoretical or practical understanding of a subject

Resource Sharing The ALA Glossary of Library and information defines resource sharing as ''a term covering a variety of organizations and activities engaged in jointly by a group of libraries for the purposes of improving services and/or cutting costs

Also the Provincial Resource Sharing Network Policy for Alberta Public Library Boards (2009) defined resource sharing as "the common use by two or more libraries of each other's assets, whether they are equipment, staff, knowledge and expertise, materials facilities, and/or information resources".

2. List of Abbreviation and Acronyms

CAS- Current Awareness Services
CUUL-Consortium of Uganda University Libraries
INASP- International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications
KLISC-Kenya Library and Information Services Consortium
OECD- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PERI- Programme for Enhancement of Research Information
RLG- Research Libraries Group
SDI-Selective Dissemination of Information

3. Introduction

The voluminous growth of published documents in the recent past, increasing cost of information sources, technological advancements that offer newer methods of information processing, retrieval and dissemination are some of the factors which have made resource sharing a necessity. The library co-operation is a very old concept and a form of resource sharing. There are large instances of such co-operation among libraries in the library literature (Kaul. 1999). With diminishing finances, it's rarely possible for a library or information center to have enough resources to fulfill its needs of clients. There is a growing need for libraries in developing countries to redefine their resource sharing strategies so as to benefit from library collaboration that can result in among effective means of meeting the needs of library users. As the post-2015 agenda evolves, the world is at a crossroads in terms of global relations and forms of collaboration. Economic powers are shifting, while at the same time social inequality threatens to destabilise the political and economic outlook for many societies. Many pressing concerns – climate change, health, peace and stability – are universal, and can only be tackled by cross-border collaboration and sharing mechanisms.

4. History of Resource Sharing

The Centre for Research Libraries was built in Chicago in the 1960s. It was to coordinate cooperation among 162 institutions to acquire; store and preserve less frequently used but very expensive research materials for the institutions need.

In the 1970s costs of library materials began to go up while library budgets remained almost stagnant. Columbia, Harvard, and Yale research libraries and those of the New York Public Library founded the Research Libraries Group (RLG). The G20 Development Working Group specified knowledge sharing as one of nine pillars of the Multi-Year Action Plan on Development adopted in Seoul in 2011. It encouraged international organisations such as the UN, World Bank and OECD to strengthen and broaden sources of knowledge on growth and development and agreed that

knowledge sharing initiatives should be mainstreamed into other pillars of the G20 process (G20, 2013)

The UN High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons acknowledged this in its report on the Post-2015. Development Agenda: People and countries understand that their fates are linked together. What happens in one part of the world can affect us all. Some issues can only be tackled by acting together. Countries have resources, expertise or technology that, if shared, can result in mutual benefit. Working together is not just a moral obligation to help those less fortunate but is an investment in the long-term

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Knowledge sharing is seen as a co-created and sustained process between countries or organisations, from any stage of development and background, recognising that knowledge is universal and does not belong to any type of country – whether formally labelled as developed, developing or emerging economy.

Knowledge sharing therefore should include one or more of the following elements:

- New content or substance(gained through mutual learning and collaborative innovation);
- New processes (including current forms of policy dialogues with knowledge sharing relevant processes, as well as the longer term institutionalisation of knowledge sharing in organisations);
- New partnerships (new collaborative and trust-building relations, including complementary knowledge partners, possibly following joint standard.

A cross-cutting element is the continuity of the knowledge sharing process for implementation of reforms and transformation on the ground. In this context, "feedback loops" or "learning loops" offer a multi-level mechanism for interaction and new policy approaches.

Individual countries are increasingly engaging in knowledge sharing activities, emphasising knowledge as a new source of growth.

5. Resource Sharing: Kenyan Experience

In Kenya Library and Information Services Consortium (KLISC) was established in 2003 with the main objective of collective subscription to electronic resources to cope with the increasing cost of information resources.

Kenya Library Information services Consortium was established when INASP stopped funding the electronic journals that was launched in 2000 by Programme for Enhancement of Research Information(PERI) hence the need for collective subscription to PERI E-Resources to share costs.

Currently KLISC has membership of 75 institutions. Subsequently, it was agreed that the Consortium would draw its membership from University Libraries, Research institutions, Public/National Libraries. Since its inception, the Secretariat of the Consortium has been based at the University of Nairobi library.

Many libraries in Kenya have not adapted to the concept of resources sharing and sharing of resources. Resource sharing is based on familiarity of librarians on a one to one basis.

NOTE: Apart from Kenya's resource sharing initiatives other general examples include: Consortium of Academic and research libraries (Illinois) (ARL) and Consortium of Ugandan Universities (CUUL)

6. Why Collaborate in Resource Sharing

Collaborative partnerships are agreements and actions made by consenting organizations to share resources to accomplish a mutual goal. Collaborative partnerships rely on participation by at least two parties who agree to share resources, such as finances, knowledge, and people. Organizations in a collaborative partnership share common goals. The essence of collaborative partnership is for all parties to mutually benefit from working together.

There are instances where collaborative partnerships develop between those in different fields to supplement one another's expertise. The relationships between collaborative partners can lead to long term partnerships that rely on one another knowledge sharing is defined as "the provision of task information and know-how to help others and to collaborate with others to solve problems, develop new ideas, or implement policies and procedures" (Wang & Noe, 2009). Partnership and collaboration are often used inter-changeably, sometimes within the same paragraph or even sentence. Much use of the terminology is policy driven; giving way to the use of terms such as 'joined-up thinking' and 'joined-up working'

In general, partnerships for sustainable development are self-organizing and coordinating alliances. In a more strict definition; they are collaborative arrangements in which actors from two or more spheres of society- whether state, market, and civil society, are involved in a non-hierarchical process through which these actors strive for a sustainability goal (Glasbergen et al. 2007) In recent times, partnerships are set up to solve societal problems and they do so on the basis of a commitment that is formalized to some extent. When organizations work together, they are able to develop and fulfil much broader visions by tapping into each other's resources and expertise (Cooperrider & Dutton, 1999; Huxham & Vangen, 2005)

Many organizations recognise that a great portion of their everyday activities generate information that when recognised for its potential usefulness can be captured and stored for future use and then made available to decision makers as and when needed. Such organizations have

attempted to capture their experiences in ways that effectively transform their experience into available knowledge. These efforts have led to the development of a number of experiences -based corporate memory systems (Alem L (1998)

What is Knowledge

Knowledge refers to facts, information and skills acquired by a person through experience or education; the theoretical or practical understanding of a subject

Types of Knowledge

- **Explicit Knowledge** is knowledge that is recorded in books; films documents etc and people know that it is there. In knowledge management, people need to know where to access it.
- **Tacit knowledge** is knowledge that is in an individual's mind.
- **Indigenous i**s knowledge that is unique to a culture or society. It is also known as folk knowledge, people's knowledge, traditional wisdom

Characteristic of Knowledge

In order to understand knowledge, it must meet some criteria or have some characteristics among them;

- Knowledge has value.
- It is added if grows.
- As if grows it has branches.
- It is a dynamic and that is why it needs to be managed.
- Because of value you cannot count it. You cannot put figures, hence difficult to measure.
- It is shared but it depends on whom you are sharing with. Are you sharing to benefit or sharing to lose. If it is not shared, it means it is being held back.
- It is rooted in time; It will change with time, since it is not static.
- It is described as an asset that is of value, It is also described as affirm value that is why an organization needs to know how to manage it.
- Procedures that impact knowledge, transfer it, understanding of knowledge is very important.
- Knowledge has allocation where it resides. It resides with individuals, organizations, groups and to be able to transfer /acquire you must know where that knowledge is.
- It is situational in that it will be relevant in a particular situation. You have to know when to apply it.
- Knowledge is identified in different forms e.g. tacit knowledge- this is knowledge that is in an individual's mind.

Relationship between Data, Information and Knowledge
One cannot talk of knowledge without acknowledging that there are four interrelated terms i.e. data, information, knowledge and finally wisdom.

When Data is organized properly, it leads to information. Data needs to be processed to lead to information.
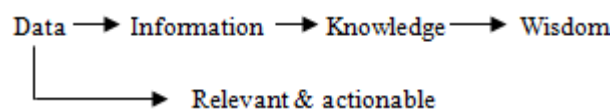
If Data is not relevant and actionable it will not lead to information, therefore no knowledge.

Knowledge Acquisition

Knowledge acquisition can be preceded by knowledge creation. In that process of creating knowledge, is a matter of looking at new insights and coming up with new knowledge.

Different Ways of Acquisition
- Scientific method of acquiring knowledge. The method of acquiring knowledge that is tested.
- Authoritarian method- Knowledge coming from an expert. The person has authority in the relevant field.
- Rationalistic method- This means there is reason. When you acquire knowledge and you use reason to accept.
- Mystical method- It is acceptance method any evidence or prove and objection, discussions,

Knowledge Creation
There are various ways of creating knowledge among them:
1) Knowledge can be created through **socialization** where you have tacit knowledge to tacit knowledge, you are just adding it. You are facilitating people to socialize hence creating new knowledge but it is still tact.
2) **Combination-** This one that converts explicit knowledge into explicit knowledge. This is done through reading.
3) **Externalization.** You are turning tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge you create new knowledge.
4) **Internalization** – when you are converting explicit knowledge into tacit knowledge

Libraries involved in Knowledge Sharing
- Those that serve the Legislature, the executive and those serving judiciary.
- Institutional libraries e.g. Universities, Research institutions and any other institution of higher learning.

The objective is to support the programmes running in their respective departments.

Areas of Resource Sharing
There are areas which institutions in which institutions can share knowledge among them.
- Inter-library loan.
- Buildings design.
- International library loan.
- Reference services.
- Contents page service.
- Expertise & facilities.
- Union catalogue.
- Library software

Resource Sharing Model
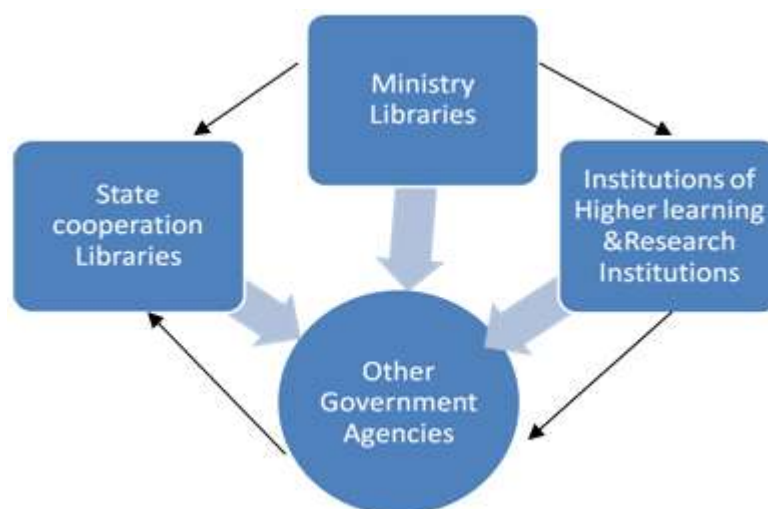
ICT as a Driving Force for Sharing Resources

In order to effectively and efficiently share knowledge, ICT has been recognized as an enabler all these processes. The nature of information science and the evolution of scholarly communication, with all the technologies it brought, are changing rapidly. One observable trend in the information environment is that more and more resources are moving to the electronic formats, in some cases being made available only in electronic form and would never be published in any other form. Standard information retrieval system like Z39.50 allows: library collection from different libraries; connection of member libraries via the Internet.

Importance & Benefits of Resource Sharing

Over the years, resource sharing has brought about many benefits among them:
- To promote free flow of information resources;
- To ensure better access to information resources;
- To ensure maximization of information resources;
- To save resources and avoid duplication of effort;
- To ensure faster provision of information and literature support to the users;
- To facilitate reciprocal exchange of local publications
- Financial savings and better use of existing resources
- Knowledge good practice and information sharing
- Mutual support between organizations
- New or improved services
- Enhancement service through access to more information services available in consortia member libraries
- Cheaper and more effective services
- Improved document delivery services
- Improved Selective Dissemination of Information and Current Awareness Services
- Increased Human Cooperation
- Skills Development for opportunities available through cooperative arrangements

Many organizations recognise that a great portion of their everyday activities generate information that when recognised for its potential usefulness can be captured and stored for future use and then made available to decision makers as and when needed. Such organizations have attempted to capture their experiences in ways that effectively transform their experience into available knowledge. These efforts have led to the development of a number of experiences -based corporate memory systems (Alem L (1998)

7. Benefits by the Community

It is believed that if knowledge is shared, it can benefit people even at the community level. Therefore the community can benefit politically, socially and economically.
- **Politically** – Sound decision making in electing their leaders, knowing their rights and putting their leaders on check.
- **Socially-** people are able to interact with each other freely, are to know what are the right facilities that are to serve them i.e. on matters of health, education, culture, sports etc
- **Economically-** People will be empowered economically, able to exploit the existing economic opportunities, able to make sound judgments etc

8. Problems Associated with Knowledge Transmission

Unreliable funding can create significant obstacles to collaborative working relationships between stakeholders. Khan and colleagues (2004) report that in Africa, the provision of adequate financial and technical resources are key to any sustainable co-management. In the Caribbean, CANARI (1999), states that the implementation of participatory decisions and management actions require not only political support but also adequate technical and financial resources.

There are many challenges associated with knowledge transmission among them;

- Physical distance
- Kind of technology that is available
- Language in which the transmission is in
- Is it transmitted to people with knowledge or just layman

- Are there interior conflicts that make it difficult for knowledge transfer?
- Is their need to create centres to assist the transfer of that knowledge?
- Possibility of misconception in terms of why is this knowledge being transmitted How excited is a library to lend 'returnable' to not her library with which it has had no past contact/experience?
- Can the loaning library be guaranteed that the item will be returned appropriately?
- How trustworthy and reasonably priced are postal and courier services within the country and outside of the national borders?
- What will it cost to dispatch an item securely to the requesting destination?
- Will the borrowing institution agree to return the item by the safest and fastest means regardless of the cost?
- For how much time the requested/loaned item will remain off the shelf?
- Can the lending and borrowing libraries be confident that the item sent is the item required?
- Can all costs associated with international inter-lending be either contained or predicted?
- Are there ways for consortia to work toward minimizing shipping costs?

9. Specific Challenges Associated with Transmission of Indigenous/ Community Knowledge

Community can be largely defined by ethnicity or geography, but it need not be. Community knowledge is based on the observations and personal experiences of community members over long periods of time. It is transmitted informally, often orally, and usually cannot be attributed to a defined source. It usually comes from trial and error rather than the Scientific method, although there are examples of community members acquiring knowledge through controlled experiments. It has historically been separate from the knowledge held and disseminated by government agencies, although there have been recent efforts by government agencies to collect and use this knowledge.

Community knowledge gathered over generations may be far more extensive, particularly on topics such as climate change that require long periods of observation.

Loss of community knowledge is associated with loss of the language associated with the knowledge, lack of written records, insistence on formal (Western-style) education, loss of access to traditional land and resource use areas, social change, and movement toward a market economy (through which Western or store-bought products substitute for traditionally made or harvested products.

A community may be reluctant to share its knowledge with researchers and government agencies there are various reasons for people's reluctance to share traditional knowledge, one of which is the sense that community knowledge has long been dismissed by Western scientists and agencies. This resentment has eased as agencies have shown more interest in community knowledge.

A second reason relates to distrust of outsiders and the government particularly the federal government and law enforcement agents. Some villages have refused to participate in studies because of concerns that law enforcement agents could find out about illegal harvests. There is also a concern that environmental organizations will use information (particularly about whaling) against local hunters. A third reason pertains to intellectual property rights, even when community knowledge is gathered for use in government decision making rather than for a commercial venture.

A community may be concerned that once knowledge enters the public domain, it can be exploited without any recognition of the community's rights to the knowledge. If a published study reveals the location of community hunting and fishing sites, outside hunters may begin using these sites.

A fourth reason relates to the lack of compensation and community benefit. There may be little incentive to share knowledge unless it is in the community's interest to do so for example, if sharing knowledge leads to shared management or at least the protection of community resource use. At the individual level, people may be unwilling to take time out of their day to talk with researchers unless they are adequately compensated (even though the knowledge is supposed to be used to make better decisions concerning community resources).

A fifth reason relates to spirituality and religious privacy. Where community knowledge is inseparable from spirituality, communities may not want their religious practices to be discussed with outsiders.

A final reason relates to the difficulty of intercultural communication.

In collecting community knowledge, both the informant and the person collecting information must stretch beyond their normal means of communicating. This requires patience, practice, and goodwill on the part of all involved

The involvement of community members (or those who have assimilated into and learned from a community) in data collection can help overcome the tendency to distrust "outside "agencies or researchers. Also, community members may be more successful than outsiders at gathering tacit information that would otherwise be lost in the communication gap between the community and those seeking the knowledge. In some cases, community member community organizations so that they can conduct the research themselves are uniquely qualified to obtain the desired information. Agencies may consider offering grants to communities are more willing to share information when they can see the benefits of doing so. Examples of community benefits include opportunities to participate in decision making, employment opportunities, and cooperating agency status for environmental impact statements.

Role of Information Professionals in Knowledge Sharing
Information professionals are being called upon to fast track knowledge sharing initiatives. Having pursued the most relevant courses in information science, they are to be champions of knowledge sharing and collaboration. I this respect the most paramount activity is marketing of information services by providing the following activities among them.

- Mounting information literacy programmes
- CAS
- SDI
- SDDI

In order to conduct the above activities, packaging and repackaging of information is a very important element in knowledge sharing and collaboration.

Way Forward

There is need therefore for those involved in knowledge sharing and collaboration to:

- Develop good personal relationships
- Understand compatible cultures or understanding of different cultures
- Have written agreements
- Have experience of change management, leadership and vision
- Have clear and agreed mutual benefits and collaborative advantage
- Have a clear focus on the bigger picture
- Do Careful planning

10. Conclusion

The benefits derivable from library cooperation are immense. Savings are made from limited funding; users have ready access to a greater amount of information resources; duplication of materials is reduced and time and efforts too; the real gain, which is substantial, is intellectual, where access to larger amount of materials is made. It is unfortunate, however, that despite good laid down policies, visions, missions and promises, the philosophy of resource sharing in developing Countries in general, African Information and knowledge has remained largely on paper and we are yet to realize the dream of electronic content.

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